

COUNTERPOINT.

CHAPTER LI.

INTRODUCTORY.

697. **Counterpoint** has been defined as 'the art of combining melodies,' *i.e.* the art of adding one or more melodies above or below a given melody in such a way that the whole when heard together shall produce a satisfactory effect.

The word is derived from the Latin *punctum contra punctum*. In ancient music, notes, from their shape, were called 'points.' Thus, to write one note against another was to write *punctum contra punctum*.

698. The precise meaning of *Counterpoint* will be best seen by comparing it with *Harmony*. In harmony we are mainly concerned with the construction and relation of chords, troubling little about the individuality of each separate part. In counterpoint, on the contrary, while the harmonic basis must be clear and definite, it is imperative that each separate part or voice shall have a melodic interest in itself. Thus, in the following example, each of the five parts has a separate and well-defined melody, which is interesting in and for itself.

FIG. 347.

Mozart, Jupiter Symphony.

The image displays a musical score for four staves, each representing a different voice part in a counterpoint exercise. The staves are arranged vertically, with the top staff in treble clef and the bottom staff in bass clef. Each staff contains a series of notes and rests, forming a distinct melody. The notation includes various note values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes), rests, and accidentals (sharps and flats). The score is labeled with '&c.' at the end of each staff, indicating that the pattern continues. The overall style is classical, consistent with the title 'Mozart, Jupiter Symphony.'

699. It is usual to practise counterpoint by writing melodies or parts *above* and *below* a given melody called the *subject* or the *canto fermo*.¹

700. If a melody added to a subject only sounds satisfactory when heard in the position in which it is written, *i.e.* either *above* or *below* the subject, it is said to be in **simple counterpoint**. This is usually the case.

701. A melody, however, may be added to a subject in such a way that it sounds satisfactory both when heard *above* and *also* when heard *below* the subject, and such a melody is said to be in **double counterpoint**, fig. 348.

It will be seen that *double counterpoint* means *invertible* counterpoint.

FIG. 348.

(a) Haydn, P.F. Sonata.

(b)

702. When *three* (or *four*) parts are written so as to be invertible they are said to be in *triple* (or *quadruple*) counterpoint.

In fig. 347 we have an example of *quintuple counterpoint*, the five melodies there used being invertible.

703. Counterpoint was practised before Harmony. Indeed, when a certain advance in musical knowledge had been made in the study and practice of Counterpoint, Harmony stepped in and systematised that know-

¹ In the early attempts at writing music it was customary to select some well-known air or church hymn tune and to add parts to it, making it, as it were, the foundation of the music. This air was called the *Canto Fermo*, *i.e.* *fixed song* or *Plain Song*. This was sung or *held* (Latin, *teneo*) by the *Tenor* (v. § 246).

ledge from the point of view of the construction of chords, and Harmony has ever since continued and is still continuing to add fresh advances. The first attempts were very tentative, and writers of counterpoint limited themselves by very strict rules, especially as regards what combinations should be used.

704. When counterpoint is written according to the old rules and restrictions it is called **strict counterpoint**. When music, not bound by the rules of strict counterpoint, but written with all the resources of modern harmony, also gives an individuality to each separate part after the methods of counterpoint, it is said to be in **free counterpoint**.¹

705. It is of the highest possible advantage for the student of music to practise counterpoint, and to practise it *bound down by the rules which regulated early counterpoint*.

The student is urged to accept this statement with the assurance that did space permit, it might be amply proved and made clear to him.

CHAPTER LII.

LAWS OF PROGRESSION.

706. Many of these laws are exactly like those given in harmony, but they are repeated here for the sake of completeness.

Melodic Progression.

707. When a part moves by *step* (either tone or semitone) it is said to move by **conjunct** movement; when a part proceeds by *leap* it moves by **disjunct** movement.

708. No part may proceed by an *augmented* interval except in one of the repetitions of a sequence.

709. When a part proceeds by a *diminished* interval it must at once return to some note within that interval (§ 431).

710. No part may leap a seventh or a ninth.

711. The interval of a seventh or a ninth may not occur in any part without at least two intervening notes (*a*).

Exceptions: a seventh with an eighth intervening (*b*); or a ninth with a tenth intervening (*c*).

FIG. 349.

(a) Bad.

Good.

(b) Good.

(c) Good.



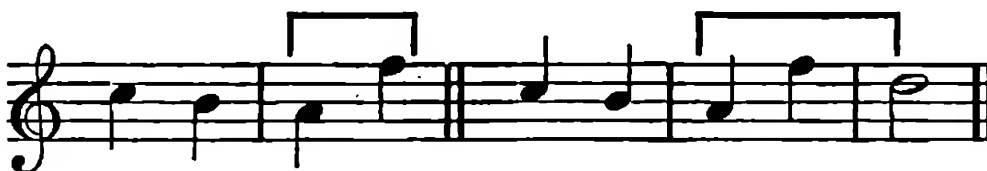
¹ Music written in this way is often called *contrapuntal*.

712. *Before* a leap of an interval greater than a fifth it is best to proceed in a direction contrary to the leap (a). *After* a leap of an interval greater than a fifth, it is best to return to a note within the leap (b).

FIG. 350.

(a) Good.

(b) Good.



713. After moving by several successive seconds a part may not leap *in the same direction* to an accented note (a) ; but it may leap to an accented note *in the contrary direction* (b).

If the leap is to an unaccented note the part may leap either in the same or in contrary direction (c).

FIG. 351.

(a) Bad.

(b) Good.

(c) Good.



Harmonic Progression.

714. No parts may move in perfect fifths, octaves, or unisons, §§ 434–437.

715. No upper part may move in fourths with the bass (§ 442).

716. Hidden fifths, octaves, and unisons are forbidden between the extreme parts, except in moving to another position of the same harmony (§ 440).

717. Hidden fifths and octaves should be avoided when possible, even in the inner parts or between an inner and an extreme part. They are least objectionable when one of the parts moves by step.

718. No two parts may overlap or cross (§ 482).

719. In two-part writing a third may not be followed by a fifth when both parts move a second.

FIG. 352.



720. In two-part writing one major third may not follow another at the step of a major second.

FIG. 353.



721. The **leading-note** in counterpoint is not quite so restricted in its movement as in harmony. It may never be doubled except when it is a passing note, or in a sequence, or in an arpeggio while being held in another part (§ 757).

In a perfect cadence the leading-note must rise to the tonic. In other cases it is free to rise or fall.

722. The interval of the tritone (augmented fourth) may not occur between a note of the subject in one bar and a note of the counterpoint in another *when both parts proceed by step* (a). This is called **false relation of the tritone**¹ (a).

There is no false relation when one of the parts proceeds by leap (b), or when the movement by step is caused by a passing note (c).

FIG. 354.



¹ Called also *mi contra fa*. According to the ancient rules, it was forbidden to have in successive chords the *mediant* (i.e. *mi*) of one key and the *subdominant* (i.e. *fa*) of the key a fourth above the first, e.g. the mediant of G, i.e. B, with the subdominant of C, i.e. F.

723. Harmonic combinations which may be used in strict counterpoint are (a) common chords and first inversions.¹ (b) The only discords allowed are passing notes and prepared discords, i.e. *suspensions*.

724. In major keys the only available chords are: (a) the common chords on the first, second, fourth, fifth, and sixth degrees, together with their first inversions; (b) the first inversions of the triads on the third and seventh.

FIG. 355.



725. In minor keys the only available chords are: (a) the common chords on the first, fourth, fifth, and sixth degrees with their first inversions; (b) the first inversion of the triads on the second and seventh; (c) when the fifth of the minor scale is in the bass it may be accompanied by the interval of a sixth, and either the bass or sixth may be doubled, but no third may be added; (d) when in the minor the bass *descends* stepwise from the tonic to the minor sixth then the minor seventh may be the bass of a first inversion.

FIG. 356.



726. The chords mentioned in §§ 724-5 may follow each other in any order, except that the common chord on the second of the scale should not be followed by that on the tonic, except when both chords are in their first inversion.

¹ The second inversion is disallowed because it contains the interval of a perfect fourth from the bass, which even in modern harmony is dissonant (§ 335).

727. **Rules for doubling.** The *root* is the best note to double, the next best is the *fifth*. The *major third* should not be doubled unless the doubled note is approached and left in contrary motion and by step of a second. There is no objection to the *minor third* being doubled.

For doubling the leading-note see § 721.

728. **Rule for omission of notes from a chord.** The *fifth* should, as a rule, be omitted in preference to the *third*.

729. There are five species of counterpoint.

The *first species* has note against note, i.e. when there is one note in the counterpoint to each note of the subject.

The *second species* has two notes in the counterpoint to each note of the subject.

The *third species* has more than two notes in the counterpoint to each note of the subject.

The *fourth species* has two notes in the counterpoint to each note of the subject, but written in syncopation.

The *fifth species* or *florid counterpoint* is a mixture of the other species; it consists in the main of the fourth species, ornamented by combination with the second and third.

CHAPTER LIII.

FIRST SPECIES OF COUNTERPOINT.

730. Each species will be separately taken in two, three, and four parts. As we have remarked before, very strict rules are to be observed, and these rules apply to such points as the manner of beginning and ending an exercise.

SECTION I.—First Species in Two Parts.

731. Every exercise must begin with a *perfect* interval, either the unison, fifth, or octave when the subject is in the lower part; with the unison or octave when the subject is in the upper part.

Every exercise must end with a *perfect cadence*, i.e. the leading-note proceeding to the tonic, while another part proceeds from the supertonic or dominant to the tonic.

A perfect cadence must not occur in the course of an exercise, but only at the end.

FIG. 357.



732. Two-part counterpoint must not have the *unison* in any bar except the first and last.

733. The imperfect concords, thirds, and sixths, are preferred to the perfect concords, fifths, and octaves. The perfect fourth is entirely forbidden because of its dissonant effect (§ 335).

734. Contrary motion is preferable to similar motion.

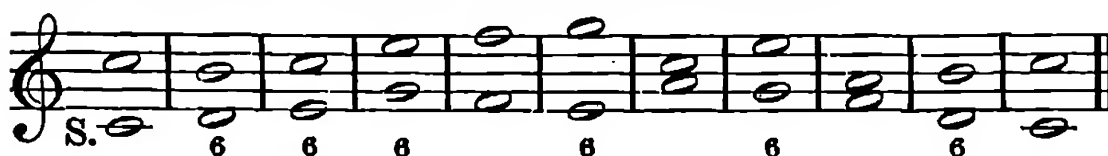
735. To avoid monotony, do not use more than three *consecutive* thirds or sixths.

The same note should not be repeated in two or more consecutive bars.

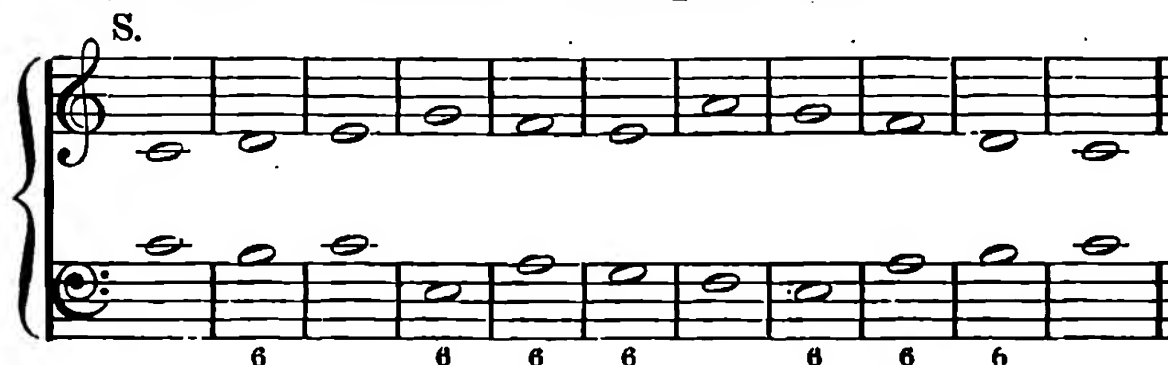
The object of all these rules, it will be readily seen, is to avoid monotony and to make each separate part contrast well with the others and stand out independently.

EXAMPLES IN THE major.

(a) *Subject in the alto ; counterpoint above.*



(b) *Subject in the treble ; counterpoint below.*



¹ The subject in counterpoint always ends with the progression supertonic to tonic. This is in order to allow a final cadence when the subject is placed in the bass.

EXAMPLES IN THE MINOR.

(a) Subject in the bass ; counterpoint above.

Example (a) shows a two-part exercise in the minor mode. The subject is in the bass, and the counterpoint is written above it. The counterpoint is marked 'S.' and '(§ 736)'. The bass staff has figured bass notation: ♭6, 6, 8, 7, 8, 6, ♭6.

(b) Subject in the alto ; counterpoint below.

Example (b) shows a two-part exercise in the minor mode. The subject is in the alto (treble staff), and the counterpoint is written below it. The counterpoint is marked 'S.'. The bass staff has figured bass notation: 6, ♭6, 8, 6, 6, 6, ♭6.

736. **Figuring.** The student is advised to figure even two-part exercises. From §§ 723-5 he will have little difficulty in doing this. The only point to be specially noted is the interval of the sixth above the dominant in minor keys (§ 725 (c)). In order to distinguish this from a $\frac{6}{3}$ it is usually figured $\frac{8}{6}$, implying that either note may be doubled, but that no third may be added.

The student should now work exercises, using the *canti fermi* given on p. 287.

SECTION II.—First Species in Three and Four Parts.

737. With the increase of the number of parts the difficulty increases, and therefore in three and four parts some of the rules for two-part writing are relaxed. For example :

(a) Two parts may occasionally have a unison in the course of the exercise.

(b) The rule forbidding more than three successive thirds or sixths between any two parts is less strictly enforced, because variety is afforded by the third part.

(c) The repetition of a note is less objectionable than in two-part writing.

738. In other respects the rules to be followed remain the same. The general rules for the distribution of the notes of a chord (§§ 284-5) are to be followed; an even distribution is best; if that is not possible the widest interval should as a rule be between the two lowest parts.

739. In the first bar one of the parts must begin with a perfect concord; one of the other parts may have the third. In four parts begin with a complete chord.

740. As before, the exercises must end with the perfect cadence, in this case the tonic chord preceded by the dominant common chord with its root in the bass, or the first inversion on the supertonic.

FIG. 358.



EXAMPLES¹ IN THREE PARTS.

(a)

Example (a) shows two staves, Soprano (S.) and Bass (S.), with musical notation. The Soprano staff has a treble clef and the Bass staff has a bass clef. Both staves contain a series of notes and rests, illustrating a counterpoint exercise in three parts. The exercise concludes with a perfect cadence.

(b)

Example (b) shows two staves, Soprano (S.) and Bass (S.), with musical notation. The Soprano staff has a treble clef and the Bass staff has a bass clef. Both staves contain a series of notes and rests, illustrating a counterpoint exercise in three parts. The exercise concludes with a perfect cadence.

¹ These examples, to save space, are given in *short score*. The student, however, is advised to get accustomed to open score and the C clefs (§ 19) v. example § 302.

(c)

S. 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

EXAMPLES IN FOUR PARTS.

(a)

S. 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

(b)

S. 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

CHAPTER LIV.

SECOND SPECIES OF COUNTERPOINT.

SECTION I.—Second species of counterpoint in two parts.

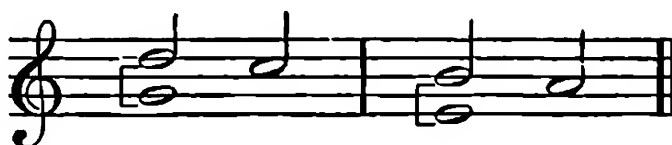
741. In the second species the counterpoint has two notes to each of the notes of the subject.

742. The first note of each bar (*i.e.* the accented note) must be a concord; the second (the unaccented) note may be either a concord (*i.e.* another note of the same chord) or a passing note (or auxiliary note) approached and left by step. When possible a passing note is preferred (§ 528).

743. No bar except the first and last may have the unison at the accented beat. There is no objection to the unison at the unaccented beat.

744. Perfect fifths or octaves may not occur on the accented beat of two successive bars. Such fifths and octaves are best avoided even at successive unaccented beats.

FIG. 359.



745. To avoid monotony the same counterpoint should not be used twice in the same exercise even when the subject is different.

746. In each bar there must be only one chord.

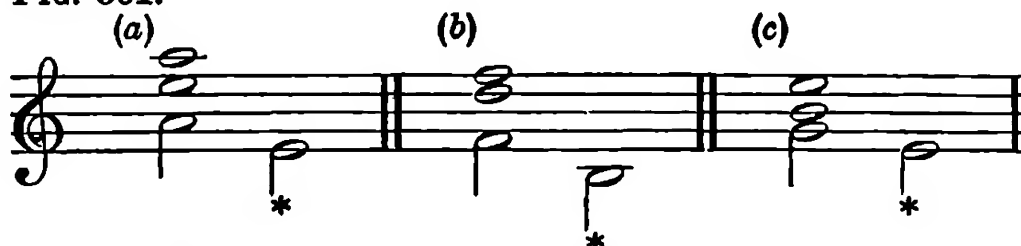
An exception to this is when the counterpoint in the bass begins with a first inversion and there is no room for a passing note between that note and the bass in the next bar. In that case the bass may leap a fourth upwards or a fifth downwards.

FIG. 360.



747. Caution. When the counterpoint *leaps* in the bass care must be taken that it does not leap to a note which, by being in the bass, would produce a $\frac{6}{4}$ (§ 723-5), or a diminished fifth, or a fifth below the leading-note, such chords being disallowed.

FIG. 361.



748. **Passing notes in minor keys.** When the dominant and the leading-note are harmony notes the major sixth may be used between them, ascending or descending, fig. 263 (a).

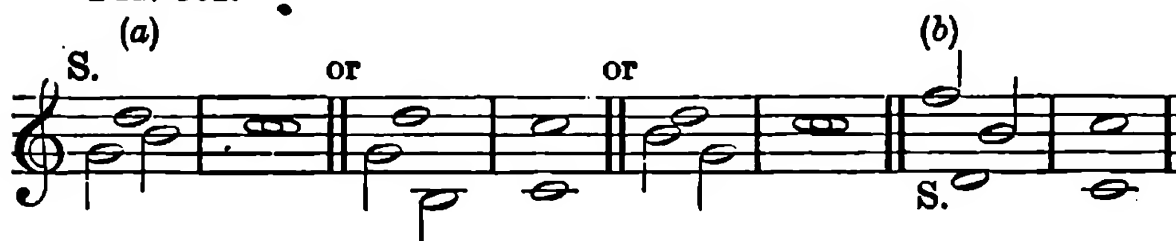
When the submediant and the key-note are harmony notes, the **minor seventh** may be used between them, ascending or descending, fig. 263 (b).

If the leading-note begins two consecutive bars, the **major sixth** may be used as an auxiliary note; so also the **minor seventh** when the minor sixth begins two consecutive bars.

749. In the first bar the counterpoint must begin after a half-bar's rest. By entering after the subject, the counterpoint acquires greater point and individuality. The first note of the counterpoint must be a perfect interval.

750. **Cadences.** The principle underlying cadences in counterpoint is that there must be **only one chord in a bar**. This, in all species, must be the dominant common chord in its root position, or a first inversion on the supertonic (§ 740).

FIG. 362.



EXAMPLES IN TWO PARTS.



SECTION II.—Second Species in Three and Four Parts.

751. Only one of the parts will be in the second species, the others being in the first, following the rules of the first species.

752. As the part in the second species begins after a rest the

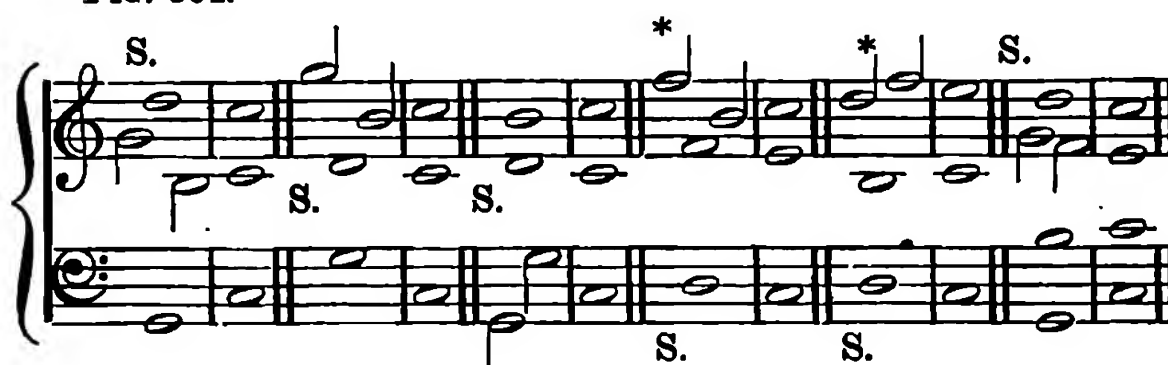
other parts must begin with a perfect interval. The moving part may begin with an imperfect interval.

FIG. 363.



758. Cadences.

FIG. 364.



* These moving notes may be used in the alto.

EXAMPLES IN THREE AND FOUR PARTS.



(b)

(c)

CHAPTER LV.

THIRD SPECIES OF COUNTERPOINT.

754. The third species may have three, four, or six notes to one of the subject, four being the most usual.

755. The first note of each bar must be a concord; the others may be concords or discords, but all discords must be approached and quitted by step.

If the note to which a passing-note proceeds is also a passing-note, the passage must continue in the same direction in passing-notes until a harmony note is reached (fig. 262).

756. A second may not resolve on a unison, fig. 268.

757. When the counterpoint is in the bass the *fifth* of a chord may be used in arpeggio, provided that it is neither the *highest*, *lowest*, nor *last* note of the arpeggio. This also applies to doubling the leading-note.

FIG. 365.

(a) Good.

(b) Bad.



758. Changing-notes may be used in accordance with the rule stated in § 548.

759. Notes passing through the interval of a tritone are not allowed, except when they form part of a continuous passage beginning before and passing through this interval.

FIG. 366.

Bad.

Good.



760. The counterpoint begins after a rest equal in value to one note of the counterpoint.

761. Cadences, v. § 750, and notice the forms employed in the following exercises.

EXAMPLES IN TWO PARTS.

(a)

S. 6 6

(b)

S. 6

EXAMPLES IN THREE PARTS.

(c)

S. 6 6

(d)

S. $\sharp 6$ 6

6 6 $\sharp 6$

EXAMPLE IN FOUR PARTS.

(e)

S. 6

6 6

CHAPTER LVI.

FOURTH SPECIES OF COUNTERPOINT.

762. In the fourth species the counterpoint has two notes to each note of the subject, but the second note of each bar is tied to the first of the following bar in syncopation (§ 79).

763. The first note of each bar (except the last) must be either (a) a suspension prepared in the previous half bar, in which case it resolves by falling or rising a second ; or (b) a concord, in which case it is free to rise or fall provided it leaps to another note of the chord.

The note on the second half of each bar must be a concord.

FIG. 367.



764. The rules for suspensions here are identical with those described in § 500, only it must be remembered that, *in strict counterpoint, second inversions cannot be used* (§§ 723-5), consequently the second inversions of chords with suspensions which are available in harmony are here excluded.

765. The suspensions available are: the *suspended ninth* with first and third inversions, according to §§ 501-2; the *suspended fourth* with first and third inversions, according to §§ 507-15; the *fifth* on the third and seventh of major and minor keys resolving by rising as in § 516.

766. No suspension is allowed in any progression which, if the suspension were absent, would have forbidden consecutives § 500 (e).

767. The note (or its octave) on which a suspension resolves must not be sounded at the same time as the suspended note, except the ninth and the fourth, according to the rules explained in § 500 (f). The note on which the suspended fifth resolves can never be sounded with that fifth.

768. The counterpoint must begin after a rest equal in value to one note of the counterpoint.

769. The chief cadences are shown in the following examples :

EXAMPLES IN TWO PARTS.

(a)

(b) S.

5/2 6 4/2 5/2 6 5/2

EXAMPLES IN THREE AND FOUR PARTS.

(c) S.

4 #3 #5 6 4 3 8 6 #

(d) S.

5/2 6 5/2 5/2 6 *

* When the fourth species is in the bass it is often necessary to break the syncopation to get a good cadence.

(e)

S. 7 #6 # 4 3 6 7 #6

(f)

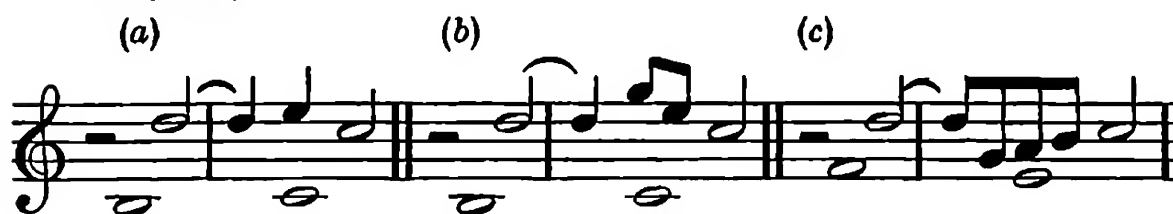
S. 4 3 5 6 6 4 3 4 3

CHAPTER LVII.

FIFTH SPECIES OF COUNTERPOINT.

770. The fifth species has already been described as an ornamentation of the fourth species. This ornamentation is chiefly brought about by ornamentally resolving (§ 520) the suspensions, *i.e.* instead of proceeding immediately to its resolution, the suspended note may leap or go by step of a second to any other note of the chord provided that it then returns to the note of resolution, either (a) by leap, (b) by arpeggio, or (c) by passing-notes.

FIG. 368.



771. The even divisions of a bar of the third species may be subdivided into two quavers; four successive quavers should rarely be used except when the first is tied to a note held over from the preceding bar, as in fig. 368 (c).

FIG. 369.



772. A long note on the odd beat (*i.e.* first, third, &c.) of a bar may be followed by shorter notes on the next beat; but short notes on the odd beat may not be followed by longer notes on the even beats unless the long note is tied to a note in the following bar. There is an exception to this rule in cadences.

FIG. 370.



773. When a note is tied from one bar to the next, the part of the tied note before the bar-line must not be *shorter* than the part which follows.

774. A syncopation may be made either from a minim or a crotchet, but that from a minim is best.

775. Although the second and third species may be used, this should not be done for more than two consecutive bars.

776. It is best to begin the counterpoint after a crotchet rest.

777. For cadences see the following examples, remembering § 750 :

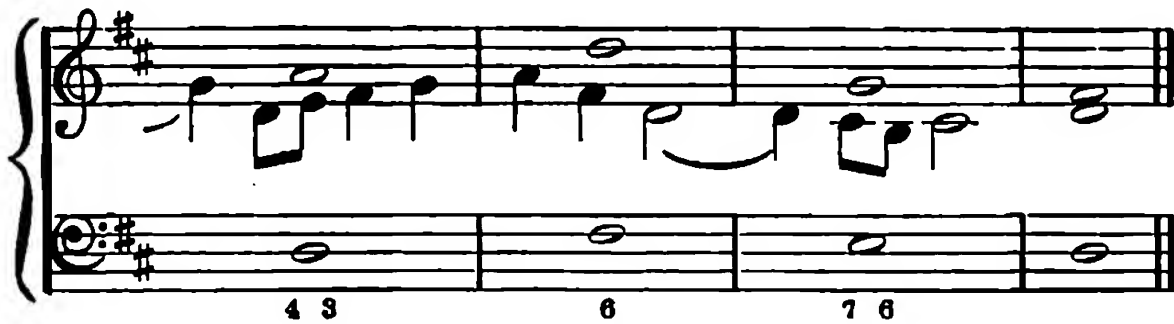
EXAMPLES IN TWO PARTS.

(a)

(b)

EXAMPLE IN THREE PARTS.

(c)



EXAMPLE IN FOUR PARTS.

(d)

S.



CHAPTER LVIII.

COMBINED COUNTERPOINT.

778. The five species of counterpoint may be combined with each other, or two or more parts may at the same time have the same species of counterpoint.

In working these exercises the following additional rules are necessary.

779. No parts may move in seconds, sevenths, or ninths with each other.

780. The *lowest moving part*, even when not in the bass, must be considered as the bass, and must not move except in accordance with the rules for the bass (§§ 715, 728).

From this it follows that two upper parts may not move in fourths unless a lower part moves at the same time as the second fourth.

781. Each part must follow the rules of the species to which it belongs, with the additional rule that moving parts, although following the rules of their species, are not correct unless they move by consonant intervals with each other. An exception is allowed when a dissonant interval is approached and left by step of a second in contrary motion (c).

FIG. 371.

(a) Bad. (b) Good. (c)

At (a) treble and alto are both correct according to their species, but the combination is incorrect because at * they make a fourth, which is not allowed because the alto is now the lowest moving part (§ 733).

At (b) this is corrected. The fourth between the treble and alto of bar two is allowed because the lower parts have moved, and therefore this fourth is between upper parts.

782. When the *fourth* species is used in two or more parts at the same time, or the *fourth* and *fifth* are combined, the rules for double and triple suspensions (§§ 521–8) must be followed.

783. No part may move by *similar* motion to the note (or its octave) on which a suspended note resolves, but any part may move in *contrary* motion to such note, §§ 379, 506.

784. When several parts are in the fifth species it is good to let the parts enter after each other. The parts should be contrasted as much as possible, one part moving while another has holding notes, &c. When possible, points of imitation should be introduced, as in Ex. (e) p. 287.

EXAMPLES OF COMBINED COUNTERPOINT.

(a) Second and third species combined.

First system of Example (a). Treble staff: quarter notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Bass staff: half notes D3, F#3, A3, C4, B2, A2, G2. Interval numbers 6 and 6 are written below the bass staff.

Second system of Example (a). Treble staff: quarter notes F#4, G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F#4. Bass staff: half notes E3, G3, A3, C4, B2, A2, G2. Interval numbers 6 and 6 are written below the bass staff.

(b) Second and fourth species combined.

First system of Example (b). Treble staff: half notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Bass staff: half notes D3, F#3, A3, C4, B2, A2, G2. Interval numbers 9 8 and 7 6 are written below the bass staff.

Second system of Example (b). Treble staff: half notes F#4, G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F#4. Bass staff: half notes E3, G3, A3, C4, B2, A2, G2. Interval numbers 7 6 and 7 6 are written below the bass staff.

(c) Second and fifth species combined.

S.

Figured bass for the first system: ♭6 - 9 8, 6, 4 3

Figured bass for the second system: ♭, 6, 9 8, ♭ -

(d) Second, third, and fourth species combined.

S.

Figured bass for the first system: 5, 6, 6

Figured bass for the second system: 7, 6, 9, 8, 4, 3

(e) Fifth species in three parts.

(a) (b)

S.

7 6 9 8 7 6

S.

6 7 6 7 6

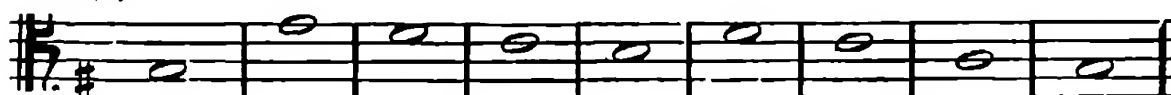
Canti Fermi FOR EXERCISES IN COUNTERPOINT.

These subjects should be used in every part, counterpoint being added above and below. They must be transposed when necessary to suit the compass of the part in which they are used. The same subject should be worked in all species.

Major.

(1)

(2)



(3)



(4)



(5)



Minor.

(6)



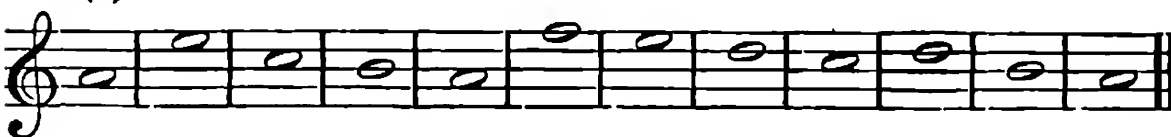
(7)



(8)



(9)



(10)

